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# Russian Society and Elites in 1989-2009: Transformation Results and Future Perspectives

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**Abstract:** »Russische Gesellschaft und Eliten 1989-2009: Ergebnisse der Transformation und zukünftige Perspektiven«. The article covers the results of two decades of transition of Russia after 1989, putting an accent on three main issues: the configuration of the research-object (post-socialist Russia in comparison with other post-Soviet counties), the results of transition, and its main actors. The author maintains that in the Russian case of transition, *transformation* rather than *modernization* is the appropriate notion for the definition of the process during the past two decades'. In Russia we deal with the contradictory combination of a relatively successful political modernization and very controversial results in the *economical* domain. Neither in 1990, nor in 2000 was the modernization project fully realized. A systematic and comprehensive modernization that was set as the main transformation task in the beginning of the transition process is still at the national agenda. However, a modernization strategy is difficult to be followed both for historical reasons and current circumstances. The author considers two types of limitations impeding the realization of the modernization project – one is historically determined and one is contemporary, both with an accent on the value orientations of elite and mass groups.

**Keywords:** transformation, transition, modernization, elites, mass groups, values, socialization.

The landmark of 2009 may be considered as a significant event for many reasons. The most important of them is the twentieth anniversary of the 1989 events that served as a turning point in the history of many post-socialist counties, first of all in Central and Eastern Europe, but marked also an important milestone in the USSR's political evolution. This essential moment allows us to re-think the last two decades' transition results and makes it possible to conceptualize better the processes taking place in post-communist countries. A relevant approach demands the analysis of three main points: the clarification of the object under investigation (i.e. post-socialist countries), the results of the process, and its main actors. The article is devoted to all three issues with an accent on the last one.

The clarification of the object may start from following position. In recent years, a number of scholars have spoken out against comparing post-

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communist countries with each other and against the summary use of the term of “post-communist country,” for such countries as the Czech Republic and Turkmenistan have little in common today from a political and economic standpoint. However, I tend to side with the position of those experts (see for example Makarenko 2008) that reject this view as being inadequate for at least three reasons.

First of all, the similarity of post-communist countries stems not only from their relative geographic proximity in a region stretching from Central Europe to Mongolia but also from the many characteristics that they had in common at the start of transition: there are a sufficient number of criteria to consider the initial state of political development of these countries in the late eighties and early nineties to be more or less the same. These criteria include a single dominating ideology (in different variations); the lack (total or partial) of private property and poorly developed market relations; similar institutional models of state structure (different versions of party states); and the relative similarity of political culture that took shape in this geographic region over the second half of the 20th century (despite certain national differences).

Secondly, although there are considerable variations between different subgroups of post-communist countries, one can identify a lot of common traits and similar models of transformation within each subgroup, which makes it possible to evaluate the effects of institutional choices and political decisions on the countries’ development.

Finally, few countries have reached a level at which one can speak with certainty of the success or failure of modernization. Therefore, during the subsequent expansion or curtailment of transformation processes in these countries, factors that marked the development of their neighbors in preceding years may arise (Makarenko, 2008).

The second issue of the analysis – content of the process – seems to be more important. During the first stages of post-socialist transformations, people tended to view the latter from the standpoint of the progressivist paradigm of a linear movement along the trajectory “erosion and breakup of authoritarianism – state-controlled liberalization – institutional democratization – non-consolidated democracy – democratic consolidation.” However, it already became clear during the first years of reforms that, in a number of cases (that were numerous in the post-Soviet space), it was not a question of the movement from authoritarianism to democracy but of the transformation of one type of non-democratic regime into another that often led to the consolidation of a “new autocracy.” “In a number of cases, one can state with certainty that we are dealing not with ‘transition’ states but with well-consolidated political regimes of a new type that do not fit into the logic of ‘drawn-out democratization’” (Roeder 2004, 94; Mel’vil’ 2004, 65, 71; Oleinik and Gaman-Golutvina 2008).

Changes in political practices led to changes in their conceptualization. During the early stages, the concept of modernization was the most widely used: despite the diversity of approaches to the study of socio-historical processes denoted by this concept, the latter clearly includes the notion of a transition from social structures of the “traditional” (“archaic”) type to social structures that began to develop intensively in the Western European cultural realm in the 16th and 17th centuries.

At the same time, one should keep in mind that there are two interpretations of the criteria of modernization in scholarly works. The first interpretation arose in the 1950s-1970s through the study of the experience of countries that shook off colonial rule. It laid an emphasis on the socioeconomic criteria of modernization (level of economic and technological development with an emphasis on industrialization; scope and quality of education among the population; scope and quality of vertical mobility; etc.). The second approach took shape in the 1980s and 1990s and stressed the importance of the political dimensions of modernization with an emphasis on the importance of political pluralism (division of powers, competitive elections, multiparty system, freedom of information, and multichannel access to it). Considering the evolution of post-communist countries over the last twenty years, one can state with certainty that, although a correlation between the socioeconomic and political dimensions of modernization is to be expected and often exists, it is not necessary. A competitive political environment can exist in problematic socioeconomic conditions, while good indicators of socioeconomic development do not always coincide with modernization in the political sphere.

After scrutinizing the contemporary history of a number of post-communist states, people have begun to put in doubt the universal nature of the modernization project. The classical theory of modernization, which is based on a strict dichotomy, is clearly shifting towards a less rigid theoretical scheme. The experience of reform in post-socialist societies has led scholars to employ a notion of transformation that rejects the teleological interpretation of the process and focuses on the multivariate, unpredictable, and ambiguous nature of political development. Although no one doubts that transformation is a target-oriented process, its results can never be predicted ahead of time. The notion of transformation includes the understanding that the results of development are unpredictable, for, in the course of large-scale transformation, the goals of development also change constantly, as they are correlated with the specific socioeconomic, political, national, and other characteristics of the transforming society. The more radical and the more incipient the transformation, the less defined its vector of evolution.

The aforementioned “unpredictability” as a characteristic of the transformation process means that its results include the appearance of new forms or new connections. Transformation is complex target-oriented change of society as a holistic social and cultural system that acquires new structural elements in the

process. The latter, in turn, define and evoke new types of social action. At the same time, social change leads not only to the emergence and institutionalization of new elements of culture and social structure on the local, national, or global scale but also to their transformation into sociocultural standards that determine social activity aimed at introducing (consolidating) or rejecting innovation:

Transformation is mutually stimulating change of models of social action, on the one hand, and of the functioning of social institutions connected with the intentional and target-oriented impact of nominal rules (formal norms, procedures, or laws), on the other (Diskin 1999, 5).

In other words, transformation is a complex system of institutional and procedural changes: on the one hand, it is the rational and target-oriented change of nominal rules (formal norms, procedures, and laws) that has an impact on the mechanism of the functioning of social institutions; on the other, it is linked to the change of models of the cultural, socioeconomic, and political activity of people. As a result, processes of social transformation are longer, more complex, and more contradictory than other known forms of change, for it is a question of the transformation of social structures, the creation of new social strata, and the consolidation of society in its new form.

As concerns the Russian case of transition, *transformation* rather than *modernization* is the more appropriate notion for the definition of two decades of change in Russia since 1989. More correctly: in Russia we deal with the contradictory combination of a relatively successful political modernization and relatively poor results in the *economical* domain (i.e. economical decline at the end of 1990th, when the GDP dropped by about 50 % as compared with the beginning of the 1990th; unstable growth after the turn of the century). From a general point of view and in particular compared to other developing economies in the context of the BRIC-group (namely China) Russia lags behind in terms of quality and speed of its economic growth during the 1989-2009 period. The goal of economic modernization that was set as the main transformation tasks in the beginning of the transition process are still at the national agenda.

Moreover, in 2009-2010 the idea of modernization obtained second wind. In a programmatic article of president D. Medvedev "Rossiya, vpered" (2009) (Russia, forward) and in the 2009 president's message to the federal parliament *modernization* obtained the status of a main policy objective. Supposedly this slogan will top the electoral program agenda in the case of Medvedev's participation in the 2012 presidential campaign. To my mind the idea of modernization and the corresponding agenda are relevant to vital national tasks; namely post-industrial modernization may become the key factor for solving a great number of problems in Russian society – from poverty to drug addiction. However, whatever the importance of the goal may be, a modernization strategy

does not look easy to be put interpractice – both for historical reasons and current circumstances. Let us start from the historical aspects.

The difficulties of implanting modernization projects in historical Russia were traditionally rooted in the weakness of inner impulses within the framework of Russian traditional model of accelerated modernization according to which the country developed during the last several decades (in details see: Gaman-Golutvina 2009). The impetus for modernization in the historical past derived as a rule from outside as the results of unsuccessful competition with geopolitical rivals. One more difficulty was the fact that the modernization *goals and objectives* were tasks that left the capabilities of society behind. This circumstance, in turn, determined the prejudice of many social groups – both elite and mass – towards modernization projects. As to *mass groups*, their indifference to modernization was due to the fact that, for large groups of Russians, modernizations were historically accompanied by overexertion and over-exploitation and, hence, violence (in order to compensate the scarcity of other resources for development – financial, material, temporal, etc.). The Russian empire was constructed “through a process of genuinely inhuman fight for survival ... The Russian empire was built and defended by the people at a cost of unprecedented human sacrifice” (Solonevich 1991, 244). Moreover, “only through the use of extreme and all-encompassing pressure, iron discipline and terrible human losses could this ... state exist” (Fedotov 1992, 284). The reforms of Peter I or Stalinist industrialization both were founded on the “bones of Russians”. Congruently the famous Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky wrote that the exhaustion of the overworked forces of the nation during Peter I’s transformation was so great as if it has been fighting not only for Karelia and Livonia, but for all of Sweden, or even five Swedens (Klyuchevsky 1993, 579)

But these tasks were determined more by the necessity of people’s survival in the situation of a competition with successful geopolitical rivals, rather than were dictated by ruling elites’ arbitrariness. Hence, quite often the authorities acted as the lash that whipped the country’s development, sometimes contrary to their own will. The fate of Alexander II who initiated, under the pressure of the defeat in the Crimean War, the Great Reforms of the 1860s-1870s (to some extent contrary to his political convictions), may be considered as an example.

As for the *political class*, its ambiguous but mostly negative attitude toward modernization projects was conditioned by the fact that modernizations in historical Russia were accompanied, as a rule, by large-scale purges of the political class. These purges were aimed at securing the maximal effectiveness of the administrative apparatus in its capacity as the prime modernization agent. The most vivid example are the reprisals of the 1930s when the so-called old Lenin’s guard was replaced by a “military-sportive class” (G. Fedotov) – “iron Commissars and iron Party secretaries”.

As to the attitudes towards modernization in the post-Soviet period, these attitudes changed in two waves. The first post-Soviet decade was marked by a choice in favor of stagnation. And this choice was rather consensual despite a huge gap between the elites and the general population with regard to value orientations, income levels and social capital. What united elites and the population at large was their rejection of 'development' as a valued trajectory for social and economic change. In the 1990th the negative consensus about stagnation united both the elites and the population at large. So the "Third Rome" (the famous definition of Russia in Slavophile rhetoric) wound up in the Third World.

The start of the second post-Soviet decade was marked by the gradual revival of society's interest to strategy problems. The key "message" of V. Putin's presidential campaign in 1999-2000 was the idea of modernization. Putin's success at the 2000 elections showed that society began to take an interest problem of development. Nevertheless, these ideas remained to a large extent unrealized: despite the considerable financial assets accumulated in Russia as a result of the increase of oil prices in 2003-2008 (about 700 billion dollars according to expert estimates; Volkov 2008), Russia was unable to effectuate a *development model*. During the period 2000-2008 a model of "*growth without development*" was implemented. Despite the announcement of an ambitious "energetic superpower" project, in practice Russia became a trite petrostate (Goldman 2008).

To our opinion, this was not mere the result of a simple administrative mistake but stemmed from the elite's conscious choice in favour of the petrostate model and, in a broader context, the elite's continuing rejection of the modernization idea. Russian elites are still *strategically inert*. They are characterized by weak *strategic initiative and weak concern about problems of strategy*.

As to the causes of this situation, the first and most evident one is the fact that elite groups became the main beneficiary of post-Soviet transformation in Russia. The post-Soviet period in Russia became the epoch of an "elites revolution". Whereas the 20th century was marked by clear domination of an egalitarian paradigm, the last decade of the 20th century became the time of an elite triumph. Under the slogan of democratization the elite became the genuine master of the country, interested in preserving the status quo.

The high level of conflicts in intra-elite relations is another reason of the post-Soviet elite's weakness as a modernization agent. However, the most profound reason of the ineffectiveness of today's elite as a developmental agent is largely determined by the considerable political, psychological, and moral costs of the forced accelerated modernizations during previous historical periods and the deformations that had arisen in the course of that development. The current elite's indifference to strategy is the flip side and result of hypertrophying the eschatological orientation of the historical project of accelerated modernization with its *emphasis on the value of the future and the instrumental*

*quality of the present.* To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, one could say that Russians were asked for so long predominantly about *what they could do for their country* that currently most citizens and especially elites are interested only in *what their country can do for them.* This accounts for the famous paradox that, while the industrial modernization in the 1930s-1950s was implemented by descendants of peasants and first-generation intellectuals, the outcome of political activities of the governmental officials of the 1990s (the high number of members with academic degrees and titles in the administrative bodies of Russia in the 1990s was unprecedented in the history of the country) was a systemic crisis. And this is not a result of the administrative incapacity of this generation as is sometimes assumed: Simply, *development* (systemic modernization) was not the initial task of reform. The slogan of the process was *distribution.* And the strength of this (re-)distributive passion was determined by the huge potential of accumulated dissatisfaction within the elite resulting from the psychological aftermath of the contradiction between the *function of control* and *opportunities of appropriation* that was experienced by Soviet nomenclature, whose successor became the current elite. Controlling colossal state resources, the CPSU nomenklatura was rather poor, and by the standards of today, even destitute. Most of the property belonging even to high ranking officials was public: Furniture bore the stamps of the administration and property was regularly inventoried. Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Allilueva, remembered how her father impressed upon her and her brother Vasily an understanding of the temporary nature of leaders' privileges: "Dachas, flats, cars – all these do not belong to you, and you should not think of them as yours" (Allilueva 1990; 159). The following episode illustrated how much this contradiction traumatized the generation of the late-Soviet nomenklatura. Andrei Grachev, the former press-secretary of Mikhail Gorbachev, recalls a visit by the Gorbachev couple to France in 1989. When the French president's wife, Danielle Mitterrand suggested to Raisa Gorbacheva (who had praised the honey put on the table for breakfast) that she would send her several bee-hives for their country home, Raisa clapped her hands and reproachfully said to Gorbachev: "How many times have I asked you, Mikhail Sergeevich, to refuse state dachas and to get even a small plot of land! You see, right now, we have nothing to call our own – we'd have nowhere to put a beehive!" (Grachev, 1994).

Indeed, the Soviet nomenklatura – the ruling class of the Soviet society – was a class of "servants without rights" as no other power elite (for more details, see Gaman-Golutsina, 2006). Endowed with rather modest benefits (compared even with the Western middle class), the nomenklatura had to hide them away constantly, and always fearful that what was acquired yesterday would be taken back tomorrow. It is the contradiction between the *right of use* (truly large-scale and sometimes practically unlimited) and the *right of possession* (or, to be more exact, the lack of it) that became the principal contradiction, inducing the Soviet ruling class to become the gravedigger of the Soviet sys-



tem. Thus it is no wonder that the prevailing impetus of the new elite became the desire *to get everything here and now*.

The failure of the modernization project and the partial re-archaization of social life became a by-product of such attitude. Another natural consequence in this context became the partial regression in the elite formation processes, that took place partly in Russia and much more in some other post-Soviet countries (first of all in the post-Soviet Central Asia and South Caucasus states). These processes were marked by a transition from the modern principles of bureaucratic recruiting to recruitment based on traditionalistic forms. In Russia, this principle meant merging power and money; in Kazakhstan *zhuses* formed again and acquired a political status; in Tajikistan landsmen clans revived; in Turkmenia – kin clans; in Chechnya – *teips*. Such transformations make it possible to speak of the partial re-archaization of elite formation processes. That is why the greatest and simultaneously most complicated problem in the present modernization context is to stimulate an orientation towards modernization values within the political class. Naturally, carrying out a modernization project requires *not only drawing up a concept and strategy of development* but also and above all stimulating the elite's political commitment to this strategy in corresponding *practical* policy. The profound indifference of the current elite to the idea of development is really problematic, since namely elite groups are responsible for setting the national agenda. Although power groups in Russia have practically unlimited possibilities to exert influence, these groups are still rather ineffective in realization of a modernization project.

What are the perspectives of a modernization project in future? While thinking about the likelihood of a re-orientation of the values of both the political class and mass groups in favour of a developmental values and a modernization strategy, it should be borne in mind that this kind of reorientation is not merely a matter of subjective preference, but is also determined to a large extent by the objective laws of the long waves of alternations between public opinion's attachment to universal values and private ones. In this regard, it is worth noting that social life changes in cyclical rhythm. "The change of landmarks" can be found in American history. It is well known that the characteristics of Americans noted by de Tocqueville in the first and second volumes of his famous work "Democracy in America" (though mere five years passed between the writing of the first (1835) and the second (1840) volumes), were very different. In the first volume, de Tocqueville noted energy, sympathy, civic activity, and an attachment to social interests while assessing American society. If the Americans "had to concern themselves only with their own affairs, their lives would lose half their meaning and would seem empty, and they would feel extremely unhappy" (Tocqueville 1994, 191). Yet in the second volume, which came out, as we have noted, only half a decade later, de Tocqueville depicted the American as weak, servile, and powerless, entirely absorbed in his private interests. The renowned American historian, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., after com-

paring such different characteristics, came to the conclusion that social activity and private interests swing, pendulum-like, between private concerns (self-interest) and general interest (patriotism).

The American can be so absorbed by his private concerns as if he is absolutely alone in this world, yet, the next moment he devotes himself to the social interests. At times it seems as though he is motivated by total greed, and at others, by whole-hearted patriotism

– it was on the basis of this reflection of de Tocqueville that Schlesinger rested his idea of American history cycles, defining a cycle as the perpetual movement between the nation's adherence to the social concerns, on the one hand, and to the individual interests, on the other (Tocqueville 1994). Schlesinger's own research provides a convincing argument in favour of the notion that while elaborating the forecast of the society's perspectives of developmental strategy taking into account the peculiarities of the public mood cyclical nature.

As to the current attitudes of Russians towards developmental values, Russian society seems to be tired of two last decades of stagnation-stability. It seems to be ready to move towards modernization values and orientations. Modernization tasks are also at the agenda of intra-elite discussions. But modernization in contemporary Russia has two influential opponents. One of them is gas and oil companies that are not interested in high-tech development for reasons of competition. The configuration of the other opponent is quite unusual: I mean the *common people* and *TV*. Or to be more correct: *common people watching TV* – common not in the sense of social status but regarding the *intellectual dimension*. “Simple” *one-dimensional* (consume-oriented) people may become more serious obstacles to modernization processes than even the oil and gas lobby. As to the oil-gas lobbyists their attitude towards modernization is rather clear: oil and gas companies are interested in preserving the current rent-seeking economic structure. Possessing giant resources, oil-gas business quite effectively lobbies its interests. For example in 2009 under the pressure of “Gasprom” Russian government made the far-going decision to increase the energy prices for gas for internal consumers by 27%, that meant shifting approximately 80 billion (!) of dollars from high tech branches to the oil and gas industry. This decision may reduce the competitiveness of Russia's economy in general.

Concerning the second opponent the picture is not so clear. The intellectual dimension of society is important if the final aim of the contemporary stage of modernization is defined as the creation of knowledge based economy. The experience of other countries that successfully embarked on this way shows that the quality of human potential is the main precondition for a successful pursuit of this trajectory. That was the reason for the intensive effort undertaken in this direction in countries that succeeds in the creation of a knowledge based economy (including such diverse countries like the USA or Singapore).

Achievement of high quality human resources demands not only active social policy but also on orientation of the general population towards modernization values. In this context it is impossible to overestimate the significance of the medias' role because in contemporary society namely mass media act not only as key socialization institutions but may also act as an influential modernization agent.

What is the state of Russian mass media in this respect? And to what extent do they really act as the promoters of a modernization agenda? The answer to these questions may clarify the perspective of Russian society in future evolution. The role and particularities of Russian media in the modernization context become clear when one studies the content of Russian television as the most effective and widespread media instrument with the greatest audience (the daily TV audience in Russia is at least three times greater as the Internet audience and reaches a total of 95 to 102 million people over the age of four). The transformation of the mechanisms and channels of socialization over last twenty years has turned television into the priority agent of socialization in general and political socialization in particular. Today, *it is television that forms the meanings, content, and agenda of the public (and, in many ways, private) life* of Russian citizens. 57 out of 100 Russian citizens turn on the television when they come home; their perception and understanding of what is taking place today is almost totally determined by television. However, although it is one of the mass media, television *informs* only 8-10% of viewers that watch news (and, more rarely, analytic) programs. Polls taken by Gallup Media in 2008 showed that the public demand for news and analytic programs has fallen greatly. Although the number of news programs has more than doubled over the past two years as a result of the 2007-2008 federal electoral cycle and the appearance of two new news channels (Euronews and Vesti), the ratings and audience of each individual program has greatly fallen. One of the causes is the greater ease with which one can get news from the Internet. Yet a more important reason is that entertainment programs have become a powerful competitor of news. Expert surveys show that the audience of news and analytic programs declined considerably in 2008. "Studies conducted in 2008 show that *contemporary Russian media totally focus on entertainment*, which has made its way into all spheres of television today." Moreover, experts note that it is not only a case of the popularity of sports programs (at least three multi-hour programs per week), humor programs (at least 15 programs during the weekend prime-time alone), and programs about the lives of stars or bandits (at least a hundred programs in different formats per week) but also of the *stylistic and content-based transformation of formats that were initially totally alien to the entertainment format* (news programs, documental films, and the selection of television hosts). "Today, everything on television is subordinated to the philosophy of entertainment," writes the television and cinema critic D. Dondurei (Dondurei 2009). His studies of the changes in viewer preferences in 2008 have

shown that Russian citizens spend almost 70% of their TV time on entertainment programs – TV serials, movies, and entertainment programs proper such as humor programs, concerts, games, etc. The viewing time of serials has particularly increased: from 34% in 2002 to 46.4% in 2008. Russia ranks first in the world today in the number of serials shown on free nationwide channels (Dondurei, 2009).

These large-scale changes are clearly not accidental. One may ask about the sources of these trends and the forces behind them. Without a doubt, such a model of television serves the interests of TV management (directors of TV channels) and shareholders (formally, government officials that are in charge of television; in reality, government officials who direct the sphere of state ideology as a whole). For TV bosses, ratings are not only the exclusive criteria for evaluating TV products but also the measure of the entire media system as a whole.

Ratings, which are formally only a means of measuring the media audience, have grown from being a technical tool to serving as the chief benchmark for the entire production of all Russian TV content. One must attain at any price high program ratings (the percentage ratio of the program audience to the entire national audience) and program shares (the percentage ratio of the program audience to the total audience watching television at that time). After all, these figures completely determine the cost of advertisement that is broadcast during the programs and consequently the enormous profits of TV channels in general (over 4.5 billion dollars in 2008),

experts note (Dondurei 2009).

Surely TV covering is definitely not one-colour, but the sociopolitical themes found on television today quite often reflect predominantly differences of opinions inside power elites (the notorious war between “Kremlin towers”) rather than the spectrum of opinions in society as a whole. As a rule the television mainstream is rather friendly towards the Kremlin’s general line. This was particularly evident during the economic crisis. During the first stage, the very existence of the crisis became a “state secret”: in October 2008, the media were prohibited from using the word “crisis.” Later, when the crisis became apparent to Russians even without TV, television adopted the stance of a total and unquestioning approval of the government’s anti-crisis measures. Although not only experts (see the World Bank Report<sup>1</sup>) but also the Russian president D. Medvedev subsequently recognized that many of the government’s anti-crisis measures were ineffective, the latter never became a focus of discussions on television.

To be fair, it should be said that harmony can never be attained in the relations between the government and the opposition (this is true of all countries, not just Russia). Yet the key element is the agenda set by television, its content,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRUSSIANFEDERATION/Resources/rer18eng.pdf>.

the nature of TV influence, and its messages and metaphysics. Experts show a rare consensus in the evaluation of these parameters on Russian TV: *the metameaning of television has become entertainment, and its result is a regressive selection*. It is known that the human socio-psychological sphere has two vectors of motion: one of them is pointed upwards for developing efforts for the development of human potential, abilities, talent, and moral and ethical qualities; the other is pointed at the dark depths of the human subconscious and basic instincts and leads to degradation and personal and social disintegration. Handling with the “upper floor” of the individual gives rise to an upwards motion both of the individual and society, while the exploitation of the “lower floor” that has not been subject to cultural interdictions not only leads to a greater influence of the “depths” but can also make them capable of overpowering the cultural sphere (Dondurei, 2009). At the same time, it is clear that an upward motion always demands work and effort, while a downward motion (plunging the TV audience into the dark world of pathologies, anomalies, scandals, and perversions) is easier, more profitable, and demands no effort. When one of these formats becomes “mainstream” and becomes predominant, it leads to a certain type of sociality: the TV audience is *developing* in the case of the upward motion and *degrading* in the case of the downward motion (for more details see Dyczok and Gaman-Golutvina, 2009). Moreover, there is a clear correlation between the vectors of social and individual development: Modernization needs progress in both vectors, while social degradation inevitably leads to intellectual and moral individual disintegration. Given the sociopolitical nature of the TV-format dominating today, there is no doubt that it may result in a considerable decline of the modernization potential of society.

To set Russia on the track of modernization requires therefore not only a industrial policy re-formatting, but also a re-setting of the mental, intellectual, moral and metaphysical agendas. And this goal is much more difficult than the reorientation of industrial policy – it needs much more efforts in terms of time, resources and patience. In particular such a re-setting is impossible without a transformation of contemporary Russian state’s role and its functions. The experience of the most rapidly developing counties testifies that the state plays a decisive part in modernization. Re-formatting contemporary Russian’ state in favor of a strategy for development is one of the most complicated tasks because of the domination of the *minimal state* paradigm during last two decades. The transformation of the state needs strong political will, intensive efforts and genuine revolution in perception by both, elites and mass groups. But without such a revolution modernization in Russia is impossible.

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